

Las Cruces, NM – Support is growing for Harry Teague's national "Katie's Law." Today, Congressman Teague announced the legislation has earned the support of the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), the nation's largest anti-sexual assault organization. Katie's Law (H.R. 4614) is a bipartisan DNA collection bill that encourages states to maximize the potential of forensic DNA to solve and prevent violent crimes by collecting a DNA sample upon arrest – at the same time as fingerprints -- for certain felony crimes.

In a letter to the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security, Congressman Robert Scott, RAINN president Scott Berkowitz praised the common sense and potentially life-saving Katie's Law sponsored by Congressman Teague.

"We believe it is in the best interests of victims of sexual violence, and of the nation at large, to enact Katie's Law in order to give states an incentive to fully use all evidence at their disposal," Berkowitz wrote. "By passing Katie's Law, Congress can turn that trend [of allowing the collection of DNA evidence] into a national norm that will enhance public safety and provide justice to victims," Berkowitz continued.

"I am pleased to have RAINN as a partner as we work to ensure that Katie's Law becomes the national standard for the collection of DNA evidence," said Harry Teague. "This law will simply allow law enforcement to use modern technology and the advanced science of DNA evidence in the same way fingerprints are used today. Law enforcement needs access to all available technology to better identify dangerous and violent criminals and keep them from walking the streets."

Katie's Law is named after Katie Sepich, from Carlsbad, New Mexico, who was 22 years old when she was brutally raped and murdered. DNA under Katie's fingernails helped the police develop a DNA profile for her killer and this profile was included in the national database where all DNA samples are kept. Three years later in 2006, the New Mexico DNA database finally matched the unknown profile to Gabriel Avilla who had been arrested for several other crimes, including a felony burglary in November 2003. Katie's Law was not enacted in New Mexico until January of 2007. If New Mexico had required a DNA sample for Avilla's felony arrest in November 2003, investigators might have solved Katie's murder sooner and caught Avilla before he was left free to roam the streets for three years.

Congressman Harry Teague has been working with Katie's parents, Jayann and David Sepich of Carlsbad to develop a national Katie's Law that calls for the Justice Department to work with law enforcement in every state to make sure that they are, at the least, matching certain arrestees to the national DNA bank - the Combined DNA Information System or the CODIS. Katie's Law will also incentivize those states which not only match arrestees but also contribute to the CODIS in an effort to help save more lives and prevent crime across the country.

Studies have shown that if Katie's Law were to be implemented at the national level it would save the lives of many innocent men and women that could be the victims of violent crime. The Denver District Attorney's Office conducted a study in which they examined the criminal activities of 5 individuals and determined that 47 violent crimes (including 3 murders and 18 sexual assaults) would have been prevented had DNA been collected upon felony arrest.

To read the full text of RAINN's letter of support [click here](#) .